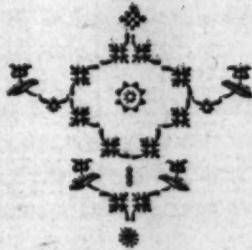


LETTERS
BETWEEN
THEODOSIUS
AND
CONSTANTIA.

1207. C. 2.
2.

BY DR. LANGHORNE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.



LONDON:
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A bound book from Morland Library
of the late James Collier Esq.



An Stanhope and Co's Poet

(from a copy held by the Bodleian Library)

TO

G E O R G E C O L M A N , E S Q .

TO live beneath the golden star of love,
With happier fancy, passions more refin'd;
Each soft'ning charm of tenderness to prove,
And all the finer movements of the mind.

From gifts like these, say what the boasted gain
Of those who exquisitely feel or know?
The skill from pleasure to extract it's pain,
And open all the avenues of woe.

Yet shall we, Colman, at these gifts repine?
Implore cold apathy to steel the heart?
Would you that sensibility resign?
And with those powers of genius would you part?

Ah, no, my friend! nor deem the verse divine,
That weakness wrote in Petrarch's gentle strain!
When once he own'd, at Love's unfavouring shrine,
' A thousand pleasures were not worth one pain.'

The dreams of fancy soothe the penive heart;
For fancy still can new delights dispense:
The powers of genius purer joys impart;
For genius brightens all the springs of sense.

O charm of every muse-ennobled mind,
Far, far above the groveling crowd to rise!
Leave the low train of trifling cares behind,
Assert it's birthright, and affect the skies!

O right divine, the pride of power to scorn!
On fortune's little vanity look down!
With nobler gifts, to fairer honours born,
Than fear or folly fancies in a crown!

As far each boon that Nature's hand bestows
 The worthless glare of Fortune's train exceeds;
 As you fair orb, whose beam eternal glows,
 Outshines the transient meteor that it feeds.

To Nature, Colman, let thy incense rise,
 For, much-indebted, much hast thou to pay;
 For taste refin'd, for wit correctly wise,
 And keen discernment's soul-pervading ray.

To catch the manners from the various face,
 To paint the nice diversities of mind,
 The living lines of character to trace,
 She gave thee powers, and she the task assign'd.

Seize, seize the pen! the sacred hour departs!
 Nor, led by kindness, longer lend thine ear:
 The tender tale of two ingenuous hearts
 Would rob thee of a moment and a tear.

LONDON,
 Nov. 10, 1764.

J. LANGHORNE,

ADVER-

THE SPECTATOR

and had therefore not done, though he had
an opportunity, many a foolish woman, who, as he
told his friend, was very easily won to him.



You will see in the body of the paper, following on the second page,
the account of the

ADVERTISEMENTS.

AS this volume may possibly fall into the hands of some who are unacquainted with the story of Theodosius and Constantia, it is thought necessary to print it here as related by the **SPECTATOR**, No. 164.

' CONSTANTIA was a woman of extraordinary wit and beauty, but very unhappy in a father, who, having arrived at great riches by his own industry, took delight in nothing but his money.

' Theodosius was the younger son of a decayed family, of great parts and learning, improved by a genteel and virtuous education. When he was in the twentieth year of his age he became acquainted with Constantia, who had not then passed her fifteenth. As he lived but a few miles distant from her father's house, he had frequent opportunities of seeing her; and, by the advantages of a good person and a pleasing conversation, made such an impression on her heart as it was impossible for time to efface: he was himself no less smitten with Constantia. A long acquaintance made them still discover new beauties in each other, and by degrees raised in them that mutual passion which had an influence on their following lives.

' It unfortunately happened, that, in the midst of this intercourse of love and friendship between Theodosius and Constantia, there broke out an irreparable quarrel between their parents; the one vaunting himself too much upon his birth, and the other upon his possessions. The father of Constantia was so incensed at the father of Theodosius, that he contracted an unreasonable aversion towards his son, insomuch that he forbade him his house, and charged his daughter upon her duty never to see him more. In the mean time, to break off all communication betwixn the two lovers, who he knew entertained secret hopes of some favourable opportunity that should bring them together, he found out a young gentleman of a good fortune and an agreeable person, whom he pitched upon as a husband for his daughter. He soon concerted the affair so well, that he told Constantia it was his design to marry her to such a gentleman, and that her wedding should be celebrated on such a day. Constantia, who was over-awed by the authority of her father, and unable to object any thing to so advantageous a match, received the proposal with a profound silence, which her father commended in her as the most decent manner of a virgin's giving her consent to an overture of that kind. The noise of this intended marriage soon reached Theodosius, who, after a long tumult of passions, which naturally rise in a lover's heart on such an occasion, writ the following letter to Constantia.

THE

" THE thought of my Constantia, which for some years has been
" my only happiness, is now become a greater torment to me
" than I am able to bear. Must I then live to see you another's? The
" streams, the fields, and meadows, where we have so often talked
" together, grow painful to me; life itself is become a burden. May
" you long be happy in the world, but forget that there was ever such
" a man in it as

" THEODOSIUS."

" This letter was conveyed to Constantia that very evening, who
fainted at the reading of it; and the next morning she was much
more alarmed by two or three messengers, that came to her father's
house, one after another, to enquire if they had heard any thing of
Theodosius, who, it seems, had left his chamber about midnight,
and could no where be found. The deep melancholy which had
hung upon his mind some time before, made them apprehend the
worst that could befall him. Constantia, who knew that nothing
but the report of her marriage could have driven him to such ex-
tremities, was not to be comforted. She now accused herself of
having so tamely given an ear to the proposal of a husband, and
looked upon the new lover as the murderer of Theodosius: in short,
she resolved to suffer the utmost effects of her father's displeasure,
rather than comply with a marriage which appeared to her so full
of guilt and horror. The father seeing himself entirely rid of
Theodosius, and likely to keep a considerable portion in his family,
was not very much concerned at the obstinate refusal of his daugh-
ter, and did not find it very difficult to excuse himself upon that
account to his intended son-in-law, who had all along regarded this
alliance rather as a match of convenience than of love. Constantia had
now no relief but in her devotions and exercises of religion, to which
her afflictions had so entirely subjected her mind, that after some
years had abated the violence of her sorrows, and settled her thoughts
in a kind of tranquillity, she resolved to pass the remainder of her
days in a convent. Her father was not displeased with a resolution
which would save money in his family, and readily complied with
his daughter's intentions. Accordingly, in the twenty-fifth year of
her age, while her beauty was yet in all its height and bloom, he
carried her to a neighbouring city, in order to look out a sister-
hood of nuns among whom to place his daughter. There was in this
place a father of a convent who was very much renowned for his
piety and exemplary life; and as it is usual in the Romish church
for those who are under any great affliction or trouble of mind to
apply themselves to the most eminent confessors for pardon and con-
solation, our beautiful votary took the opportunity of confessing her-
self to this celebrated father.

" We must now return to Theodosius; who, the very morning that
the above mentioned enquiries had been made after him, arrived at a
religious house in the city where now Constantia resided; and de-
firing that secrecy and concealment of the fathers of the convent,
which is very usual upon any extraordinary occasion, he made him-
self one of the order, with a private vow never to enquire after Con-
stantia; whom he looked upon as given away to his rival, upon the
day on which, according to common fame, their marriage was to
have



Plate I.

Published as the Act directs, by Harrison & C^o, Jan^r 26, 1782.

ADVERTISEMENT.

vir

have been solemnized. Having in his youth made a good progress in learning, that he might dedicate himself more entirely to religion, he entered into holy orders, and in a few years became renowned for his sanctity in life, and those pious sentiments which he inspired into all who conversed with him. It was this holy man to whom Constantia had determined to apply herself in confession, though neither she nor any other, besides the prior of the convent, knew any thing of his name or family. The gay, the amiable Theodosius, had now taken upon him the name of Father Francis, and was so far concealed in a long beard, a shaven head, and a religious habit, that it was impossible to discover the man of the world in the venerable conventional.

As he was one morning shut up in his confessional, Constantia kneeling by him, opened the state of her soul to him; and after having given him the history of a life full of innocence, she burst out in tears, and entered upon that part of her story, in which he himself had so great a share. "My behaviour," says she, "has, I fear, been the death of a man who had no other fault but that of loving me too much. Heaven only knows how dear he was to me while he lived, and how bitter the remembrance of him has been to me since his death!" She here paused, and lifted up her eyes that streamed with tears towards the father; who was so moved with the sense of her sorrows, that he could only command his voice, which was broke with sighs and sabbings, so far as to bid her proceed. She followed his directions, and in a flood of tears pouzd out her heart before him. The father could not forbear weeping aloud, insomuch that in the agonies of his grief the seat shook under him. Constantia, who thought the good man was thus moved by his compassion towards her, and by the horror of her guilt, proceeded with the utmost contrition to acquaint him with that vow of virginity in which she was going to engage herself, as the proper atonement for her sins, and the only sacrifice she could make to the memory of Theodosius. The father, who by this time had pretty well composed himself, burst out again in tears upon hearing that name, to which he had been so long disused, and upon receiving this instance of an unparalleled fidelity from one who, he thought, had several years since given herself up to the possession of another. Amidst the interruptions of his sorrows, seeing his penitent overwhelmed with grief, he was only able to bid her from time to time be comforted; to tell her that her sins were forgiven her; that her guilt was not so great as she apprehended; that she should not suffer herself to be afflicted above measure. After which he recovered himself enough to give her the absolution in form; directing her at the same time to repair to him again the next day, that he might encourage her in the pious resolution she had taken, and give her suitable exhortations for her behaviour in it. Constantia retired, and the next morning renewed her applications. Theodosius having manned his soul with proper thoughts and reflections, exerted himself on this occasion in the best manner he could, to animate his penitent in the course of life she was entering upon, and wear out of her mind those groundless fears and apprehensions which had taken possession of it; concluding with a promise to her, that he would from time to time continue his admonitions when she should have taken upon her the holy veil. "The

rules

" rules of our respective orders," says he, " will not permit that I should see you, but you may assure yourself not only of having a place in my prayers, but of receiving such frequent instructions as I can convey to you by LETTERS. Go on cheerfully in the glorious course you have undertaken, and you will quickly find such a peace and satisfaction in your mind, which it is not in the power of the world to give."

Constantia's heart was so elevated with the discourse of Father Francis, that the very next day she entered upon her vow. As soon as the solemnities of her reception were over, she retired, as it is usual, with the abbess, into her own apartment.

The abbess had been informed the night before of all that had passed between her novitiate and Father Francis, from whom she now delivered to her the following letter.

AS the first fruits of those joys and consolations which you may expect from the life you are now engaged in, I must acquaint you that Theodosius, whose death fits so heavy upon your thoughts, is still alive; and that the father to whom you have confessed yourself, was once that Theodosius whom you so much lament. The love which we have had for one another will make us more happy in its disappointment, than it could have done in its success. Providence has disposed of us for our advantage, though not according to our wishes. Consider your Theodosius still as dead, but assure yourself of one who will not cease to pray for you in Father

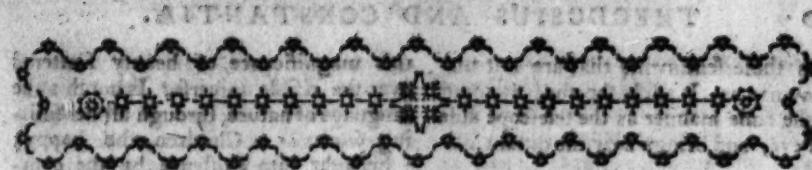
FRANCIS."

Constantia saw that the hand-writing agreed with the contents of the letter: and upon reflecting on the voice, the person, the behaviour, and above all, the extreme sorrow of the father during her confession, she discovered Theodosius in every particular. After having wept with tears of joy: "It is enough," says she, "Theodosius is still in being; I shall live with comfort, and die in peace."

The LETTERS which the Father sent her afterwards are yet extant in the nunnery where she resided; and are often read to the young religious, to inspire them with good resolutions and sentiments of virtue. It so happened, that after Constantia had lived about ten years in the cloister, a violent fever broke out in the place, which swept away great multitudes, and among others Theodosius. Upon his death-bed he sent his benediction in a very moving manner to Constantia; who at that time was herself so far gone in the same fatal distemper, that she lay delirious. In the interval which generally precedes death in sicknesses of this nature, the abbess finding that the physicians had given her over, told her that Theodosius was just gone before her, and that he had sent her his benediction in his last moments. Constantia received it with pleasure: "And now," says she, "if I do not ask any thing improper, let me be buried by Theodosius. My vow reaches no farther than the grave: what I ask, is, I hope, no violation of it." She died soon after, and was interred according to her request.

Their tombs are still to be seen, with a short Latin inscription on them to the following purpose.

Here lie the bodies of Father Francis and Sister Constance. They were lovely in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided.



THE
CORRESPONDENCE
OF
THEODOSIUS AND CONSTANTIA.

VOLUME THE FIRST.
CONTAINING
THEIR CORRESPONDENCE, FROM AN EARLY ACQUAINTANCE TO THE
DEPARTURE OF THEODOSIUS.

LETTER I.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

I

Is it possible that Theodosius can approve the philosophy of Bernier? What would become of Christianity, were we to adopt the following creed? *L'abstinence des plaisirs me paraît un grand péché.* A sin to abstain from pleasures! What can he mean? Is not this perfectly the reverse of all moral and religious precepts? Are not abstinence, and mortification, and self-denial, echoed in our ears from the first dawn of reason? Are not we taught to guard against the prevalence of pleasures in general, and to look upon them as enemies under the mask of friendship? Consider them in a religious light, and they confessedly alienate the heart from its duty. The *lovers of pleasure* cannot be *lovers of God*. The *affections* cannot be *set on things above*, while they tend to earthly objects. Consider their moral tendency, and they will be found to vitiate and debauch the soul. Selfishness, and a neglect of the social duties, are inse-

parable from the pursuit of pleasures. These are jealous gods, and demand from their votaries all the affections of the heart, all the attentions of the mind. They enslave the better faculties, and make the senses the tyrants of the understanding.

Surely the mind is too noble a province for such rulers; and, to me, the maxim of Bernier appears to be no less inconsistent with sound philosophy than with true religion. I fancy you will find some difficulty to support him in the opinion of

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER II.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

EVER amiable, and ever ingenious; pious in her enquiries, and modest in her conclusions. How delightful to accompany Constantia in the researches of truth and science! Clear in her conceptions, and acute in her expression; through the medium of her language, we discover more clearly,

10 THEODOSIUS AND CONSTANTIA.

even those sentiments that are not unknown to us. It assists the understanding in the same manner as the telescope aids the eye, and brings near the distant object.

Thus it is, Madam, that while you call upon me to the decision of moral or religious enquiries, and place me in the dictatorial chair; after having invested me with the commission of a judge, like a skilful advocate, you in some measure qualify me for that office, by laying before me the whole merits of the cause.

When I praised the philosophy of Bernier, I had not indeed forgot that singular maxim of which you have taken notice; but I was by no means aware that you would seize upon this eminence, and from thence discharge your artillery both on the philosopher and his encomiast.

Well, fair friend! since Venus is armed for the engagement, and has already made her attacks, she must expect to meet with a Diomede. But Theodosius, perhaps, will not be satisfied with his conquest; if, like the goddess of beauty, Constantia should retreat, wounded only in the band.

Yes, my amiable moralist, I do approve the philosophy of Bernier; nay, I adopt his creed too, and cordially declare with him, *L'abstinence des plaisirs ne paraît un grand péché.* What is sin? Is it not to act contrary to the will of the Supreme Being? Beyond all doubt; where that will is known. Is it not evident that the benevolent Creator of the universe intended, and still intends, only the happiness of his creatures? This must be allowed from the consent and the appearance of his works in general. And is not pleasure happiness? It must be so, or the term is vain. If, then, the Supreme Being intended principally the happiness of his creatures, and if pleasure be happiness, to abstain from pleasure, is to frustrate the intentions of Providence, to act contrary to his will; which is, confessedly, the very essence of sin; *L'abstinence des plaisirs est un grand péché.* It is a capital sin to abstain from pleasure, since it must have been the primary view of the Divine Beneficence to communicate pleasure to human nature.

To what other end was this pomp,

this magnificence of beauty scattered over the visible universe? Is not this the language of nature, through all her smiling works? ‘ Children, be happy; brought into existence by the command of that glorious Being who is love itself, your inheritance is pleasure, and it is your only duty to cultivate it well.’ Are they not, therefore, children of disobedience, who thus invited into the vineyard, stand idle in the market place, and vainly say, that no man hath employed them?

Hath God created a paradise, and will not man look around him to enjoy it; but, like his first parent, as described by the English poet, still pensively contemplate himself in the murmuring fountain? Shall he for ever seek his image in the waters of adversity; and shall the fair scenes of life be deformed through such a mirror?

Surely, to abstain from pleasure is a negative kind of guilt; since that very abstinence is a reproach to the eternal and invariable Benevolence!

From whom do we derive every natural desire? By whose wisdom were the fine organs of sensation formed? To whose bounty do we owe the objects of gratification? And to whose benevolence are we indebted for the capacity of enjoyment? Proceed not these powers and faculties from the great Source of all things? Was not each adapted to its peculiar function? And is not the neglect of these capacities a fault? Is not the mortification of them a crime?

By what means came pleasure into the world? Was it introduced by some malignant spirit? Did some demon contrive it for the destruction of mankind? That could not be; for no inferior being could have power to pervert the faculties and capacities of human nature. In such a case the Supreme Creator must have been an imperfect being: he must have wanted the will to secure the happiness of his creatures; or, if he had the will, he must have been without the power to execute or establish it. Either of these suppositions it would be folly to admit. Pleasure, therefore, can only owe its origin to God, and its very name proves it to be of divine extraction.

And shall we refuse acquaintance with an object of heavenly descent? Shall we ungratefully bid the giver resume his

his gifts, or reproach him with a supposition, that he would affect us with propensities we ought not to indulge?

Yes, Bernier, you are in the right. The renunciation of pleasure must be a sin; not only actually, but effectually a sin. The mind that refuses admittance to such a guest, must acquire a gloomy and unsocial habit; be fit only for the regions of monastick dulness, where lazy sanctity offers a preposterous devotion to that Being, who intended that we should rejoice in and partake of a general and social happiness.

When the bias of nature is opposed, when her sovereign dictates are broken, man becomes incapable of rendering any acceptable service either to his God, to society, or to himself! To his God he is ungrateful; nay, he insults him with a devotion more becoming the worshippers of Moloch, while he supposes him capable of delighting in cruelty; of afflicting his creatures, by giving them passions which it should be a merit to mortify; and of tantalizing them, by requiring a rigid abstinence from every inviting enjoyment that nature suggested. To the interests and affections of society he becomes cold and indifferent, when, what should principally engage him to them, the social desires of nature groan beneath the yoke of undelighted abstinence. Upon the same principles he is an enemy to himself, to that being which was given him for his enjoyment, and which at last he shall render back to the Giver, with, 'I knew that thou wert an hard Master, therefore the talents that thou gavest me I have made no use of: behold, here it is again.'

O Pleasure! thou first, best gift of eternal Beneficence! Fairest and most beloved daughter of heaven, all hail! and welcome to sojourn on earth! A stranger thou art to every malignant and unsocial passion, formed to expand, to exhilarate, to humanize the heart!

But whither has my subject transported me? Have I lost sight of Constantia? That cannot be; for pleasure is my subject.

Yet possibly my amiable friend is by this time more than half displeased. 'Where,' says she, 'will this end? Has Theodosius conspired with Bernier to revive the school of Epicurus? By no means, Madam! The pleasure

we preach is not the offspring of chance, but the child of God.'

The Epicurean doctrine of pleasure is selfish; this that we would recommend is pious. From considerations respecting the uncertainty of this life, and the improbability of another, the Athenian philosopher, if we may believe his biographer, Laertius, taught his followers, to pursue incessantly all that was called enjoyment. From reflections that are honourable to the eternal Providence; that conclude him to be the liberal giver of all that deserves the name of enjoyment, of the objects that gratify, and the faculties that enjoy; in obedience to his benevolent intentions, would we summon the world to the pursuit of pleasure, and convince it that the sun doth not shine in vain?

Nor will this doctrine, as my fair friend apprehends, be at all inconsistent with the pure precepts of that religion we profess.

For, after all, what is pleasure? Is it to be found at the table of riotous festivity, or in the venal arms of erratic love? Impossible! for these are the haunts of madness, of meanness, disgust, and folly.

Human Pleasure is of a delicate temper. She disclaims all connections with indecency and excess: she declines the society of untender Desire, and of Riot roaring in the jollity of his heart. A sense of the dignity of human nature always accompanies her, and she cannot admit of any thing that degrades it. Tenderness, Good Faith, Modesty, and Delicacy, are her handmaids; Temperance and Cheerfulness are her bosom friends. She is no stranger to the endearments of love; but she always consults her handmaids in the choice of the object: she never refuses her presence at the social board, where her friends are always placed on her right-hand, and on her left. During the time, she generally addresses herself to Cheerfulness, till Temperance demands her attention.

Let us now, Constantia, enquire whether this amiable being merits the charge that you have brought against her.

Will she alienate the heart from its duty? But how? Has it not already appeared, that she herself was sent from God, the best gift of infinite benevolence? It is only in the abuse, in the

perversion of the gift, that the heart can be alienated from it's duty.

The lovers of pleasure may, undoubt-
edly, be lovers of God. To be pleased
with the gift, and not love the giver,
would be unnatural and ungrateful.
Hence the charge of the inspired writer,
that some were *lovers of pleasure,*
more than lovers of God. What was
this more or less than the charge of in-
gratitude?

The *affections*, you say, cannot be
set on things above, while they tend to
earthly objects. Literally, they cannot;
but the best devotion, that such an im-
perfect creature as man is capable of
paying, is derived from his mortal feel-
ings, perceptions, and enjoyments.
When he finds himself happy in these,
he is naturally led to adore that Being
who gave them; to look up with gra-
titude to him, and so far to *set his affec-
tions on things above*, as he has reason
to hope for a happier allotment in an
improved state of existence. Thus
far, even a regard to things on earth,
may assist his piety, and encourage his
hope.

Our ideas of heavenly objects are
extremely abstracted from sense, and yet
it is difficult through any other medium
to extend the affections to them. It
has been observed, with philosophical
truth, by one of the sacred writers, that,
*If a man love not his brother whom
be hath seen, how should he love God
whom be hath not seen?* I will bor-
row his mode of reasoning, and will
add, if a man love not those gifts of
God which he hath seen, how should
he set his affection on those which he
hath not seen? If he hath not been
pleased with those enjoyments which
the Divine bounty hath allotted him,
as peculiarly adapted to this state of
being, what moral prospect can he have
of being better satisfied in any future
state?

But you quarrel with the *moral* ten-
dency of *pleasure*, and load it with the
heavy charge of vitiating and debasing
the mind; adding, that selfishness, and
a neglect of the social duties, are inse-
parable from the pursuit of it. Has
not my friend made a *misnomer* here,
in giving the name of *pleasure* to Vice?
Change the terms only, and the charge
is just. It is impossible that innocent
pleasures should vitiate, or that delicate
enjoyments should debase the mind. It

is impossible that those social delights
which soften the heart, should make it
selfish, or exclude from it's feelings a
regard for the happiness of others.

If we look into the minds and man-
ners of men, we shall find that not the
very abstemious, the mortified, or the
fancifluous, are most distinguished
for social virtues. The reason, I think,
is obvious: when innocent appetites
and desires are restrained, the social af-
fections languish under the same oppres-
sion. It is scarcely possible, that any
man who admits of no enjoyments in
himself, should be indulgent to those of
others. We behold innumerable in-
stances of this, both in those who cannot
and in those who will not enjoy.

The encouragement of pleasure, there-
fore, cherishes the social virtues; and
he who is of a happy disposition himself,
will be the first to promote the happiness
of his neighbour.

Yet, will not pleasures enslave the
better faculties, and make the senses the
tyrants of the soul? No doubt—if the
enjoyments of the mind are excluded;
but the fool has it's peculiar pleasures,
which may and ought to take their
turn; and if the intellectual appetites
are gratified, as well as the sensual and
the social, the province of the mind will
neither be uncultivated, nor be subject
to the usurpation of invaders.

Pardon me, Constantia! when I write
to you, I know not when to have done!
Even now I lay down the pen with re-
luctance—even now, with a sigh, I sub-
scribe

THEODOSIUS,

LETTER III.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

THERE is nothing more true, than
that credulity is the foible of wo-
men. I have a violent inclination to
believe every word you have said, as
well your gallantry as your philosophy:
nay, I can hardly bewail the ruin of my
poor arguments; though I have the va-
nity to think, that the breaches you
have made in them might easily be re-
paired. However, you certainly had the
happiest address to introduce your doc-
trine by the hand of flattery. The un-
derstanding of a woman is by nothing
so easily vanquished as by the artillery
of

of praise. If it be to your purpose to weaken it, give it the compliment of strength. If you would blind it, call it brighter than the day. The praise of a philosopher is really a most dangerous thing; and it is not in female fortitude to resist it. Accompanied with the ideas of truth and gravity, it makes it's way to the heart without opposition; and the sense and dignity of the speaker conspire with our natural love of it, to give it the sanction of sincerity.

Should I preclude all future compliments from the letters of Theodosius, and say no more than what is usually said upon such occasions, viz. that I could not deserve them; however true it might be, it would not save me from the charge of affectation: an imputation which of all others would be most dreadful to me! Frank-hearted let me be esteemed; and, though destitute of every other excellence, I shall not be the meanest of my sex.

But you see, my friend, I have given you serious, and, I hope, satisfactory reasons, why you should shut up the fountains of adulation; unless you think that they will give fertility to a barren soil. Assure yourself, I shall conclude this to be your opinion, if you pay any compliments either to my person or my understanding.

I find no inclination to controvert any of the principles contained in your last. They are all amiable at least, if they are not solid; and, possibly, it may be nothing more than the prejudice of a narrow education, that would withhold any part of the credit due to them.

Ah, my friend! for, surely, you are my friend, if any confidence may be reposed in human appearances; pity the ignorance of a hapless girl, I had almost said an orphan, unassisted and uninstructed!—Believe me, Theodosius, to your conversation I am indebted for almost all the valuable sentiments I have. You first taught me to think at large: you told me that liberty of opinion was as much a natural inheritance as personal liberty; that human nature had long groaned under the tyranny of custom; and that the worst species of captivity, was the imprisonment of the mind.

Ever to be remembered is that distinguished lesson, which, upon our first acquaintance, you gave me in the grove of poplars. You politely pretended, that

it was written by some other person, for the instruction of another woman: but I soon discovered in it the spirit and manner of Theodosius; and found it so well adapted to my own circumstances, that I could no longer doubt either for whom, or by whom it was written.

Notwithstanding this discovery, I must beg you will favour me with a copy of it; for that which you gave me has been destroyed, I believe, by the zeal and industry of Father M——. Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER IV.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

BY supposing me to be the author of the following letter, you have laid me under some disagreeable circumstances. But what would you conclude, should I, on that account, refuse you a copy of it? Might you not justly charge me with that affectation which you so greatly despise? You shall have it, be the consequence what it will. Constantia commands, and Theodosius must obey.

THOUGHTS ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE MIND AND MANNERS, ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY OF BOLOGNA. BY A MEMBER OF THE ACADEMY DELLA CRUSCA.

MADAM,

THE first step that a young lady can take towards improvement, is to be convinced that she wants it. The mind is situated in such an obscure recess, and is so little the object of the senses, that it is a difficult matter to take a view of it at all: much more, to behold it in its true light. Hence, we are apt to believe it sufficiently furnished, when desolate and empty; and to think it properly cultivated, though it produces little more than the rude growth of nature. Better, however, is even that growth, than some artificial products. Better is the harvest of wild simplicity, than the rank and thriving crops that have been cultivated by the industry of folly!

Of

‘ Of all the offensive weeds that are apt to spring up in a young mind, and to oppres it’s better fruits, affectation is the most destructive; where it takes root, the love of truth and nature perish unavoidably, and artifice and insincerity usurp their place. Qualities like these are so infinitely odious, so perfectly opposite to all that is amiable or deserving of confidence, that, if a woman had an aversion to being beloved, she could not find a more effectual antidote.

‘ Never, Madam, have I known an affected woman possessed of any amiable or any virtuous quality!

‘ The Coccatrici is not unknown to you. Behold in her, then, a most instructive lecture on the management of the mind? For the Coccatrici, with the best natural understanding, not uncultivated by books, is at pains to render herself the most odious woman in the world. Affection has the absolute dominion both of her person and mind. Her words, her motions, her actions, her opinions, are all under the influence of affection; all receive it’s ugly and disgusting stamp. Obscurely born herself, the Coccatrici’s passion is distinction. Without any accomplishments of person, she affects the softness, the negligence, the languishments of beauty. These, and innumerable more absurdities, arising from the same principle of affection, render her the contempt of your sex, and the jest of ours. Yet were ridiculous manners the only effect of this principle, the Coccatrici might be laughed at and pitied; but the same insincerity, the same deviation from truth and nature which produces these, has other consequences that render her detestable: she is scurrilous and treacherous; nor is this to be wondered at. A mind which affection has alienated from every natural principle of simplicity, loses at the same time the social virtues, and becomes indifferent to the interests and the reputation of others.

‘ Of no simple ingredients is this character composed. Forbidding pride, ridiculous vanity, insidious insincerity, virulent malignity, make a part of the composition of the Coccatrici. Characters are always the best com-

ments upon precepts. In the Coccatrici, Madam, you behold by what odious qualities a polished understanding may be debased.

‘ For the improvement of the manners, therefore, something more must be necessary than the mere acquisition of knowledge; and this something I take to be the cultivation of benevolence and sincerity. An infinite number of virtues will spring from these valuable roots. The love of mankind will make you a friend to every fellow-creature; and, together with the approbation of your own heart, general esteem and admiration will be your reward. The love of truth will save you from affectation, and from all it’s disagreeable consequences: sacrifice at the shrine of Nature, and borrow from her your manners and sentiments, not from the fantastick humours of fashion. From her, likewise, borrow your knowledge, and not from the labours of the schools. She will give you no narrow or illiberal ideas of her great Author. Be such writers, therefore, your study, as have made her theirs; such as have shewn the wisdom, the economy, the prudence, the benevolent purposes of her works. The contemplation of such objects gives the mind a large and liberal turn, lays a foundation for the most rational piety, and reconciles us to the allotments of life, when we behold the superintendence of a wise and benevolent Power over every department of the universe.

‘ Next to natural philosophy, the history of human-kind will merit your attention. Various are the advantages to be derived from this course of reading. A celebrated writer of antiquity has observed, that he who is ignorant of what happened before his own times, is still a child. Before I had made a competent acquaintance with history, I never could read this passage without pain and shame. I imagined that the eyes of the great Orator were upon me, and that I appeared childish before him. I am now extremely well convinced, that what he observed was comparatively just. Ignorance is the characteristick of childhood, and the mind that is uninformed, at whatever period of life, is still in a puerile state.

From

' From the knowledge of past events and their causes; from attending to the economy of Providence in the external and internal government of the world; by tracing the progress of science, and the gradual improvement of the mind, we learn to form just conceptions of human actions and opinions; to make the best use of reason in foreseeing the consequences of principles yet unpractised; to enlarge and liberalize our religious sentiments, while we contemplate the Supreme Being in the capacity of an universal parent; and to see what moral perfection the human mind is capable of, when man, in his savage and in his civilized state, is distinctly presented to our view.

' These, Madam, are enquiries worthy of a rational creature; worthy of that acute and penetrating genius which the liberal hand of Nature has given you!

' Make an adequate use of her generous and valuable gifts. Despite the sneer of superficial poppy, that is ever jealous of superior sense, and dreads the knowledge of a woman on account of it's own ignorance. If you are not without hopes of being united to a man of an accomplished mind, qualify yourself for his company. Let him not be obliged to consider his wife merely as a domestic, useful in her appointment; make him esteem her as a rational companion, whose conversation may enliven the hours of solitude; and who, with a mind not vacant or unfurnished, may, like the householder in the gospel, bring forth out of her treasure things new and old.

' To what a despicable state would your sex be degraded by those monopolizers of dignity and knowledge, who would debar you from both! What! were reason, and reflection, and memory, and every other faculty that is adapted to literary improvements, given to you as they are given to us, by a different author, or for different purposes? Mean fallacy in our sex, that would establish the worst species of tyranny over you, the tyranny of the mind! Groundless and illiberal fear in man, that he should lose his dignity in the eyes of a woman who was not inferior to him in

' sense! Is it the property of cultivated minds to see in an humble light the accomplishments of others? Is it not from such minds only, that they can meet the respect due to their merit? He who is afraid of marrying a woman that is not absolutely ignorant, gives a fair proof, at least, that such is not his own case.

' There are provinces, in which our sex may properly acquire and maintain a superiority of knowledge, and in which it would not be worth your while to excel. There are, likewise, certain departments in which you should claim, unrivalled, the compliment of excellence; but the cultivation of the mind should be equally the care of both, since Nature has given to both minds equally capable of cultivation.

' To an acquaintance with natural and civil history, you will do well to join the lighter and more amusive entertainments of the *Belles Lettres*. The study of the former will enrich, that of the latter will embellish the mind. From works of taste and harmony, we derive a kind of mechanical virtue, and learn to admire what is truly beautiful and harmonious in mortal life. The genius of poetry has a softening and humanizing influence on the mind; and it's pathetic powers increase that charming sensibility, that enthusiastick tenderness and delicacy of affection, which renders your lovely sex so justly the delight and admiration of ours.

' I mean not, however, that by this kind of reading you should soften your mind, so much as form your taste, by admiring and attending to what is perfectly beautiful, in one of the finest arts of imitation.

' This art is so naturally adapted to cultivate that harmony, which the academies of old esteemed the essence of moral virtue; that I was always at a loss to know why Plato would have poets banished his commonwealth, till convinced it was because they hurt the interests of religion, and injured the dignity of the gods, by bringing them into the joyous pursuits of poetry.

' After all, Madam, whatever proficiency you may have it in your power to make in literary accomplish-

ments,

ments, forget not that the qualities of the heart are infinitely preferable to those of the head. Should you be unable, for want of assistance or opportunity, to furnish your mind with the treasures of antiquity, to acquaint yourself with the philosophy of nature, or to embellish your taste by the more polished labours of genius, remember that you still have it in your power to make yourself amiable, by a sweetness of disposition, by an openness of heart, and simplicity of manners.

Thus far, Constantia, the grave academician. You will now, I hope, not be unwilling to take up the softer character of the Friend.—Ah! name, replete with tenderness! comprehensive of every kind, every faithful sentiment! ‘Surely you are my friend,’ did you say? Yes, Constantia, believe it! evermore believe it! If every ardent wish for your happiness, every active impulse to serve and oblige you; if the highest esteem, and the tenderest regard, may be allowed to constitute the most essential part of friendship, surely Theodosius is the friend of Constantia.

Yet, too generous in your acknowledgments, too liberal even in your ideas of gratitude! why will you attribute to me any part of your accomplishments? Alas! what am I? The little virtues I have—if any I have—I borrow from Constantia; and by continually contemplating her perfections, I acquire, as it were, a habit of imitating them.

Can I make a better use of these uncheerful hours, that I am doomed to pass at a distance from the friend of my heart? *Dans ces retraites solitaires*, I find no other consolation than what writing to or thinking of her affords me.

Why those needless prohibitions of praise? Why should Constantia forbid her friend to compliment either her person or her understanding? The former has no need of, and the latter is above all compliment!

What luxury in the indulgence of this growing tenderness! Ah, precious luxury!—perhaps, forbidden! Adieu! adieu!

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER V.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

EVER generous and obliging; but, possibly, too tender! Yet shall I blame my friend for his tenderness? Surely, no—but why ‘forbidden?’ what does that mean? Shall the intercourse of friendship be forbidden? I cannot think of that—I cannot, must not lose the friendship of Theodosius.

You have my most grateful thanks for the academician’s letter, which I will endeavour to secure from the inquisition of Father M——. The good man has a strange aversion to every thing that tends to open the understanding. Yet why would he keep us in the dark? Can it be of any advantage to him? In my opinion, the academician, (or, with your leave, Theodosius) has incontestably proved the female right to learning.

This, beyond all doubt, provoked the worthy Father’s zeal, who used to say, that all knowledge was invested in the church. Would to Heaven, that the church would be liberal for once, and dispense a little of that knowledge to an ignorant girl, who would be no less thankful for that than for its prayers!

Will you, my friend, forgive me, when I tell you, that I have frequently wished you had been in holy orders, and appointed my confessor instead of Father M——? I flatter myself you would have indulged me with works of learning and imagination, and would not have confined my poor library to *Orations* and *Notre Peres* alone.

Do not you think that the professors of religion hurt its interest, by pursuing them too closely? Suppose they should now and then afford us a little respite! Suppose they should diversify our reading and our studies; should we not return to the attentions of religion with greater alacrity?

All these churchmen, however, are not equally contracted in their opinions. I have lately stolen the reading of a very delightful book, which I have been informed was written for the entertainment and instruction of the Duke of Burgundy, by the present Archbishop of Cambray, his preceptor. I have, moreover,

ever, been told that the publication of this book was effected by the treachery of a domesick, and that it brought fresh inconveniences on the prelate already in disgrace!

In what a miserable condition is human reason, when liberal sentiments will bring a man into disgrace! Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER VI.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

I rejoice that you are become acquainted with the new publication of M. Fenelon, the most amiable philosopher that ever Europe produced! His affluence of imagination; his glowing and impassionate sentiments; the tick sweetnes and delicacy of his style; but, above all, that delightful enthusiasm, which, worshipping at the shrine of simple and beautiful nature, makes every reader a convert to her principles: all these qualities give to Fenelon the palm of philosophy among the moderns.

I mourn, with my generous Constantia, I mourn his disgrace; for it is the disgrace of my country. It is not for Fenelon we need repine. Reconciled to every event by the adducissement of philosophy, is he not more happy in the confines of Cambray, than he could be if, caressed amongst the number of favourites, he yet breathed the unwholesome air of a court? Zealous in the discharge of his pastoral duties, a friend to humankind from principle, busy in the exercise of beneficence to all orders, and all societies of men—who is so happy, or so great as Fenelon?

Like some fair star that shoots its evening ray,
Brighter along the dim wood's opening way;
So Fenelon, by favouring courts admir'd,
More feebly shone than Fenelon setis d.

Think not, Constantia, that I am partial to this illustrious man, because I have the honour and the happiness of his friendship. The following substance of a conversation, that once passed between us, will convince you, that I have given you no flattering picture of him.

M. DE FENELON.

My regard for you, Theodosius, makes me wish your happiness; and if my longer acquaintance with life may intitle me to give you any advice on that subject, I will not be sparing of it.

THEODOSIUS.

Sir, you will do me the greatest favour. I have hitherto been a stranger to misery; and if you would instruct me how to preserve the happiness I enjoy, you need only tell me how I may deserve the continuance of your friendship.

M. DE FENELON.

On that you may at all times rely. But our friendships, like every thing else that we enjoy, are subject to the influences of chance and time. I will give you the best proof I can of mine, therefore, while I have it in my power.

The life of man has many cares belonging to it; but the first and greatest care is that of the immortal soul. We cannot be too attentive to the interests of a being that shall endure for ever; and to place any other in the scale against these, would be absolute folly.

THEODOSIUS.

My lord!

M. DE FENELON.

But you cannot want convictions of this kind. Yet there is one particular care respecting the soul which may not have occurred to you.

THEODOSIUS.

I beg to be informed of it.

M. DE FENELON.

Have not you observed the progressive improvement of the mental faculties, from the first dawn of reason, to the decline of life?

THEODOSIUS.

That improvement must be obvious to every eye; but some of those faculties seem to decline with life itself; the imagination frequently languishes under the weight of years; the powers of reason and reflection are, many times, almost wholly lost; and the memory is entirely effaced. So far the perfection-

of the soul seems to depend on the perfect state of the body.

M. DE FENELON.

As the body is merely the habitation of the soul, it's tenant can no longer occupy those apartments that are ruinous, or decayed by time, or accidents. Hence some of the mental faculties seem to be annihilated, when they are only suspended; thus oftentimes we may vainly solicit the memory for an object to-day, with which it will voluntarily present us to-morrow. An intelligent nature cannot suffer from material influences; and therefore may exist in the perfection of it's powers, though those powers, for want of their proper vehicles, are not called forth.

THEODOSIUS.

I conceive the possibility of this, and am now impatient to be informed, what new care it is which has the soul for it's object.

M. DE FENELON.

As the faculties of the soul are continually improvable, and cannot be destroyed by what happens to the body, it is probable that in whatever state of comparative perfection they are, upon quitting this mode of being, in the same they will pass into another, which, though higher, shall be still improvable like the former.

THEODOSIUS.

What would you infer from hence?

M. DE FENELON.

That, next to the exercise of virtue, the improvement of the mind ought to be our principal care: for as the former will entitle us to an improved state of being, so the latter will qualify us for the enjoyment of it. From the benevolence of the Supreme Being, as well as upon the principles of reason and philosophy, we have a right to hope that the soul, when it quits the body, will not revert to that state of ignorance in which it appears to be, when it first informs it.

THEODOSIUS.

This is a very pleasing conclusion, and suggests to me a variety of agreeable reflections.

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videss M. DE FENELON. blood aid

I have received great satisfaction from the contemplation of it. It is pregnant with many circumstances of comfort. When we have been toiling for the acquisition of knowledge, we may have the pleasure to conclude, that we have not been labouring for the bread that perisbeth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life. It must be the greatest consolation to reflect, that the mental improvements we make, shall last beyond the grave; and that the treasures of knowledge we lay up here, we shall enjoy hereafter.

If we have contributed by our own writings to the advancement of science and the cultivation of the mind, what a glorious reflection does it afford, that these effects will last for ever; that the souls which have received new lights, new information from our discoveries, shall retain them in every successive period of being; and that thus we shall have contributed to the perfection of glorified natures and everlasting intelligences!—There is something ravishing in the thought! I am transported! I feel a godlike pleasure in the indulgence of it!

THEODOSIUS.

You, my good lord, who have contributed so greatly to the cultivation of the human mind, have a right to all the pleasures that such reflections can afford; and great, indeed, and adequate to the dignity of human nature, are the objects of complacency that attend them. But, for my own part, I have always thought, that every improvement the mind could make in this state of being, would be superfluous in another; that it's faculties would be infinitely enlarged, and that, at the command of Omnipotence, it would make a quick transition to the angelick nature.

M. DE FENELON.

For such suppositions, however common they may be, I apprehend we have little more or better authority than what self flattery will afford us: it appears, and has ever appeared to me, more probable, that the soul should arise to such a state of perfection as we conceive of the angelick natures, by more regular gradations than are usually assigned to it.

Here

Here our conversation was interrupted by a letter from Madame Guyon, which while he good prelate was perusing with visible eagerness, I retired into the garden, and was led into the following melancholy reflections.

' How affecting it is to observe, that the most enlightened minds make the nearest approaches to certain degrees of madness or of weakness ! Genius seems to be the child of enthusiasm ; and yet enthusiasm is frequently the disgrace, the ruin of genius. The Archbishop of Cambray, the literary ornament of Europe, distinguished for the most pure, the most refined philosophy, is carried away by the dreams of fanaticism, and attends to the ravings of an insane devotee ; for such is this Madame Guyon !'

After walking some time alone, I was again joined by the archbishop; who, with that calm benignity of countenance peculiar to him, resumed the conversation. What followed would stretch this letter too far.—Expect an account of it in my next. Adieu !

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER VII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

M. DE FENELON.

YOU will excuse me, Theodosius ; a letter from Madame Guyon always commands my attention. That seraphick woman seems to have obtained a kind of beatification ; and I look upon an address from her as it were a voice from heaven. But I will not so solicit your attention to a subject which has given occasion to so many unhappy disputes. I will pursue my purpose of giving you the best instructions I am able to give you, with regard to your conduct and your happiness.

Before we can tread the stage of life with that gracefulness and propriety which render every character easy and agreeable, it is absolutely necessary that we should acquire a considerable knowledge both of mankind and of ourselves. This knowledge is not hastily or easily to be obtained. We must have mixed with society, and have attended to the different forms that the passions and pursuits of men assume in different characters, before we can form any judg-

ment of them that shall be generally adequate. I have known some men of so keen a penetration, that they have been able to judge of characters almost intuitively. But hasty decisions, though they may often be right, may likewise many times be wrong ; and they never ought to have the least weight with us in any thing that may concern the reputation or the interest of the person we so judge of. What I would observe is, that there are methods of acquiring a readiness of judging, and that such an acquisition must be of great use to us in the commerce of life. The only means I know of are those I mentioned to you—to attend to and learn the different forms that the passions assume in different characters.

THEODOSIUS.

And yet, my lord, may not an artificial deportment frequently render such an enquiry vain ?

M. DE FENELON.

It may sometimes perplex it, but will seldom render it vain ; even artifice itself takes a colour from the passions, and they may be read and distinguished in its operations.

THEODOSIUS.

Thus you would instruct me to know men in general : but may there not be a more particular process of enquiry, where a more particular knowledge of individuals is necessary ? I should be glad to be informed how I might obtain a thorough knowledge of the man I could wish to make my friend.

M. DE FENELON.

For this, different methods have been recommended, and different experiments have been tried. Some have had recourse to the chymical process of the bottle, and others to a seditious distress ; but both to no valuable effect. The first did not consider that a man deprived of reason is no longer a man ; and the last had not reflected that, on certain occasions, a man might want the power, though he wanted not the will, to relieve the distresses of his friend.

If you would obtain a perfect knowledge of any man, it must be from his domestick character. Such a father, master, brother, son, or husband, as he shall be found, such a friend will he be. It is, moreover, in the minuter circum-

stances of his conduct, that we are to enquire for a man's real character. In these he is under the influence of his natural disposition, and acts from himself; while in his more open and important actions, he may be drawn by publick opinion, and many other external motives, from that bias which nature would have taken.

Were I once more to make choice of a friend, the first qualities I would look for in him should be Sincerity and Sensibility: for these are the foundation of almost all other virtues.

THEODOSIUS.

Stop not here, my lord, I intreat you; but tell me how that self-knowledge is to be acquired, the acquisition of which you have allowed to be so essential to our happiness.

M. DE FENELON.

There is no study so necessary as this; and yet, unfortunately, there is none so difficult. Self-knowledge, like that Hesperian fruit which was defended by the vigilance of sleepless dragons, is surrounded by so many powerful guards, that it is almost inaccessible.—Indulge me a moment, Theodosius, in my favourite province of allegory.—The most assiduous of these guards is Vanity, and at the same time the most artful. If you are determined to have access, she has address enough to impose upon you, and, instead of Self-knowledge, to present you with a different object, fair indeed, and beautiful to look upon, but very unlike the figure you ought to have seen. Pride stands, a dangerous sentinel, at the gate of Self-knowledge; when you demand admittance, he seats you on a throne, and bids you look down on the crowds that surround you: you look with complacency, and return with ignorance. Should the arts both of Pride and Vanity be ineffectual, there is yet another redoubt to be attacked, which is defended by Self-deception. This is the subtlest of all the guards that surround the tree of Self-knowledge. In her hand is a waving mirrour that turns every way, which so dazzles and confuses the sight, that you cannot possibly distinguish the real object you aim at, from the images reflected in her mirrour. At length, with one of those images you return satisfied and deceived.

THEODOSIUS.

Thee, indeed, make a formidable guard.—How shall they be overcome?

M. DE FENELON.

Only by the assistance of Truth. As the machinations of inferior enchanters vanish upon the appearance of an abler magician: or, rather, as the *diableries* of infernal spirits are destroyed by the influence of a celestial; so Pride, Vanity, and Self-deception, fly from the approach of Truth.

THEODOSIUS.

Yet is it not, my lord, a matter of difficulty to engage this valuable auxiliary?

M. DE FENELON.

—Or, rather, to persuade ourselves to employ him; for there the difficulty lies: before he can be brought over to our party, he requires so many mortifying concessions, that we reject his services because we are unwilling to purchase them at so dear a rate.

THEODOSIUS.

Yet, surely, my lord—

M. DE FENELON.

They are but imaginary possessions that he requires us to part with. It is very true; and, for that reason, one would think the terms not hard. The dominions of Vanity, like the gardens of Armida, are purely ideal, and may be given up without loss.

THEODOSIUS.

And yet, possibly, we are indebted to this same Vanity for half the happiness we enjoy. Does not the whole art of happiness consist, principally, in being well deceived?

M. DE FENELON.

You have drawn me upon a rock that I wished to avoid. For the sake of Truth and Virtue, I am willing to persuade myself it is not so; certainly we are not deceived when we derive our happiness from the cultivation of these. At the same time I will own that, such is the weakness of human nature, there are a thousand *douceurs* necessary to give a relish to life, in the composition of which, deceit has a principal hand.

But

But what the English poet calls, ' The sober certainty of waking bliss ;' that must undoubtedly flow from the exercise, or the reflection, of what is real and substantial.

THEODOSIUS.

It should seem, then, that there are two sources of happiness; one from which the imagination derives fancied entertainment and unreal pleasure; another that, arising in conscious virtue, yields to reason and reflection a more genuine delight.

M. DE FENELON.

Evidently, and we may drink at both these sources: but we should make it our care, that the fountains of imaginary pleasure contain nothing that may tend to inebriate or disorder the mind.

THEODOSIUS.

Can they ever be attended with such consequences?

M. DE FENELON.

Too frequently they are. The imagination may be indulged till it shall acquire an habitual empire over the understanding. A man whose genius and temper are naturally warm and fanciful, may give himself up so entirely to the sweet influences of enthusiasm, that the powers of cool reason and discernment shall be greatly invalidated, if not wholly suspended.

* * * * *

Imagine, my Constantia, how this speech affected me. At that moment the affair of Madame Guyon occurred to me, and I wept to think, that my amiable instructor, in his own person, bore testimony to the truth of his observation.

The remaining part of our conversation, with my answer to some passages in your last letter, shall follow this without delay. Adieu!

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER VIII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

I concealed my tears as well as possible, while the good prelate thus proceeded.

M. DE FENELON.

Every principle acquires force and influence from habit; and if it be, as it certainly must be, for our happiness, to live under the dominion of Reason, we should take care to exercise and consult it upon every occasion. Thus it will acquire strength and efficacy, and our obedience to its dictates will become easy from habit.

THEODOSIUS.

The dictates of Reason are undoubtedly the laws of life. But, in general, my lord, how impotent and ineffectual! What avails her legislation, when the will, the executive power, seems not to be in her interest?

M. DE FENELON.

The will must be gained over by art, and management. Where Reason has not established her empire, she must do it by degrees; exert her authority in little and indifferent things, make mock-fights with the enemy, and have recourse to every other gradual and persuasive method, which are made use of to reconcile us to tasks of difficulty.

THEODOSIUS.

This method, indeed, my lord, is the most promising; but it seems that we either want skill or inclination to apply it. We always consider reason as imposing her dictates with a magisterial spirit. She seems to approach us with an air of rigid honesty, rude and unpolished as the dictators from the plough.

M. DE FENELON.

And did the same simplicity of manners, which distinguished the age of Cincinnatus, prevail at this day, she would be as successful too. Alas, Theodosius! to the loss of that simplicity, to our deviation from nature, we owe the greatest part of those evils whereof we complain. I think the precept most essential to the happiness of human life, is, ' Live agreeably to nature.'

THEODOSIUS.

This precept, my lord, appears to want a comment. May I have the happiness to hear the Archbishop of Cambrai preach from such a text?

M. DE

M. DE FENELON.

Nature herself will here be the best commentator. She, as well as Reason, seems to have her conscience in the human mind, which fails not to reproach us with every breach of duty.

Alas, my friend! how often do we do violence to Nature, and cast her dictates behind! What artificial miseries do we lay up for ourselves, from the indulgence of imaginary wants! we are not content to search for happiness within the sphere of nature, it appears to be barren and insipid; we fly for it into the more specious and splendid circle of art; we are amused and dissipated in the search; but we never find the object we are in quest of. At length, weary and disappointed, we look back to the long forsaken walks of Nature, sorry that ever we deserted them, and ready enough to compliment them with those pleasure-yielding qualities which we should now be glad to find. But this last hope proves frequently vain: by being long accustomed to artificial habits, we have lost all taste for simplicity, and what might easily have engaged our affections when young, we behold with aversion in the decline of life.

THEODOSIUS.

I understand you, my lord. You would advise me to cultivate the love of nature, and to plan my life upon her simple model, while yet I am young.

M. DE FENELON.

I would, for the reasons I have already mentioned; because in her walks you will find the only genuine, the only home-felt happiness; which, however, you will be incapable of attaining, should you defer the application, till the habits of artificial life have deprived you of all relish for natural enjoyments.

THEODOSIUS.

The wisdom and experience of my venerable instructor would be sufficient to convince me of the truth of these observations; but I think I have, within the little limits of my own attention, seen the last confirmed in many instances.

M. DE FENELON.

It must be obvious to every person who

makes the least remarks on life, that those who have long lived in the circle of vanity, can never quit it. Not that they still find their account of pleasure in it, but that they are unfit for, and incapable of any other mode of enjoyment. What veterans do we behold busy in the pursuit of the most contemptible trifles! What a disgrace to human reason, to behold a countenance furrowed with age, distorted with chagrin, over an unsuccessful game! How disgusting to hear a matron, weighed down with years, discoursing like a girl on the frippery of modes! These are the unavoidable effects of pursuits habitually vain.

But when I would advise you, Theodosius, to live agreeably to nature, it is not alone that I would save you from frivolous pursuits and fantastick follies. Life is not to be left unactive; and, by escaping Seduction into the path of Vanity, you will of course take that of Wisdom. To do this, indeed, and to live agreeably to nature, are terms of almost the same meaning. For the end of wisdom is a rational and lasting happiness, which is only to be found in acting conformably to the purpose of our existence, and in treading in those paths of truth and simplicity, which nature has pointed out.



Here my ever revered instructor ended his welcome lessons. I could have spent a life in hearing him, and thereby should have found that happiness which he taught me how to obtain.

Two ends are answered by thus committing his precepts to writing; which I have done without much difficulty, as they are yet fresh upon my memory. The pen is an excellent memorialist; and, while I am writing them for you, I establish them more securely in my own mind.

Let me now turn to your last dear letter, which is not yet three days old, though so much has been written since I received it.

Alas, my Constantia! (I address you as my heart suggests) this delightful intercourse may not be of any long continuance, notwithstanding your kind and tender solicitude, that our friendship may not be interrupted.

The

The fathers of Constantia and of Theodosius, though their situation in some measure draws them into a spacious interchange of civilities, are of tempers and sentiments so totally different, that whenever they meet I think I can discover in each a stified contempt of the other. This gives me inexpressible mortification, as I am sensible that this contempt in both arises from motives equally insignificant; the one valuing himself on the superiority of his fortune, the other on the advantages of his birth.

Mistaken men! What are the distinctions that place one man above another? Not wealth or titles, certainly. Genius, wisdom, and virtue, alone, have this distinguishing power; for these alone are capable of enlarging and ennobling the mind, and of exalting the human capacity as high as it will go.

How long this smothered contempt will be suppressed by politeness, I tremble to think. Upon the least failure of respect in either party, it will burst into a storm; and, ah! then, my fair friend! then farewell this dear and happy intercourse of letters! Farewell the delightful freedom of our morning conversations! The sweet *sejour* at noon.

*Sotto le fresche fronde
Del fresco faggio* —

And the walk at evening through breathing bean-fields. Ah! enchanting walks, Constantia! when fancy, heightened by the surrounding beauties of nature, gave to all our discourse the happiest enthusiasm!

Should I not tremble, even at the possibility of losing a happiness like this?

But let us not afflict ourselves with distant evils! (O that they were far distant!) I will think no longer of them; but, quitting those tenderly-anxious thoughts, which the beginning of your kind letter suggested, will proceed to that part of it where you obligingly propose a question, and call upon me for an answer.

I am indeed of opinion, that the professors of religion hurt its interests by pursuing them too closely; particularly, when they make a merit of unnatural and unnecessary severities. Yet this unfortunate doctrine has thrown its galling weight on the easy yoke of Christianity, almost ever since its publication. The Fathers, those Fathers in whom the church has placed such an implicit confidence, gave to that religion which was meant to enlarge and humanize the mind, the meanest and most contracted spirit and principles. Some disgraced it by the vilest quibbles* and misquotations; others loaded it with the most superfluous severities, forbidding the use of natural and lawful pleasures †; nay, one § even goes so far as to declare, that the patriarch was deemed worthy of a heavenly vision, only because he lay his head upon the hard pillow of a stone, and what he did from necessity advises us to do by choice. One § has fallen into the most idle and absurd spirit of allegorizing the plainest literal narratives, facts, and precepts; another ||, with equal absurdity, adheres so closely to the letter, that he tells us the devil invented buskins to give God the lye, because it is said, that a man cannot add one cubit to his stature. In short, my friend, these lights of the church were in general the most miserable fanatics, ignorant, puerile, and cruel. No wonder, therefore, if those who consider them as guides, should tread in their steps. No wonder if they should cherish ignorance, folly, fanaticism, and every ridiculous effect of blind and superstitious zeal.

Undoubtedly, my fair reasoner, these misguided severities are ruinous to the real interest of religion; and its professors, as you observe, have certainly hurt those interests by pursuing them too closely.

Slavish and broken spirits may thus, indeed, be imposed upon; but where is that free-will offering, that rational and liberal worship, which, founded in an intelligent faith and gratitude, does real honour to the Deity? Such a worship

* See Justin Martyr's ridiculous apologies for the cross.

† Athenagoras, Jerome, Cyprian, &c.

‡ Clement of Alexandria.

§ Origen.

|| Tertullian.

can never be paid, till the mind, rescued from the tyranny of an imposed belief, acquires the privilege of thinking and concluding for itself.

It would, therefore, be for the real interest of religion (if that interest may be allowed to consist in the promotion of a rational worship and an intelligent faith) that the mind should be set at large; and Father M— would by no means lose his account in it with regard to your piety, though he should, as you say, give you a little respite, and suffer you to diversify your reading and your studies: for, what you observe is certainly just; and you would not only return to the attentions of religion with greater alacrity, but, by enlarging your moral and natural knowledge, you would acquire new and nobler principles of devotion, from beholding the wisdom and benevolence of your Creator displayed throughout the moral and the natural world.

But whether you can obtain this indulgence from your confessor, or not, you will by all means secure this letter from his inquisitorial eye; otherwise, the fate, not only of the letter itself, but of the writer, may be somewhat dubious.

I smiled at your wish, that I were appointed your confessor in the room of Father M—. If I thought you sincere in that wish, I should have very little inclination to be satisfied; for, believe me, I had rather stand in any other relation to you. In one respect, however, I should be gratified by this appointment: I should learn the state of your heart; and be assured, I would govern it with absolute sway—that would be a circumstance worthy my ambition. Adieu, my amiable friend! and remember, that if ever I am honoured with the abovementioned appointment, I will make it my question, whether you were sincere when you expressed that wish.

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER IX.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

I Have a thousand things to say; but where shall I begin, where end? My heart dies within me when I think of some passages in your last—what dread-

ful spirits of misfortune have you conjured up! lay them, for Heaven's sake, lay them again, if you have any regard for my peace or happiness. Shall I tell you that the enjoyment of your friendship is very essential to both? why should I not tell you so? Surely silence on such a subject would be a kind of disingenuity!

This free and candid acknowledgment is the only return I am able to make for all that industry of kindness I have experienced from Theodosius. Poor and inadequate is the reward, but what can I do more? Is it in my power to return those lessons in kind, by which I have been so much delighted—I hope, profited?—Exalted moralist! amiable and excellent philosopher! what a loss would Constantia suffer, if deprived of your friendship! To you she owes every valuable sentiment, and almost all the little knowledge she can boast—whatever, in your kindness, you are pleased to distinguish with praise; all, all is yours.

—*Onde s' alcun bel frutto
Nasce di me; da voi vien prima il seme;
Io per me son quasi un terreno asciutto,
Colto da voi; e'l prego a vostro gusto.*

How infinitely am I obliged to you for communicating so minutely your conversation with the excellent Fenelon! every word of that prelate deserves to be written in letters of gold. What sublime philosophy! What enlarged morality! What striking linkaments of human nature, and human manners!

But I am most charmed with the venerable man when he explains and enforces his precept of *living agreeably to nature*. I felt the truth of his observations without the aid of experience. And shall I appear vain, when I tell you that I have always retained certain sentiments that were of a colour with those of your noble friend? I have always thought, that not only the moral, but the religious happiness of human life, was best cultivated by that simplicity of manners and desires, which would always attend the love and pursuit of nature. Admire with me the following passage, which describes the happiness of the man who leads such a life.

*E'l dubbio, e'l forse, e'l come, e'l perché, riva,
Nol posson far, che non ista fra loro;*

E col

*E col vero e col semplice idio lega,
E'l ciel proprio alle sue voglie pigia.*

I think the sentiment in the third quoted verse, of uniting the idea of a God with Truth and Simplicity, remarkably beautiful.

You see I have already profited by the academician's letter, and have not neglected the amusements of poetry and the Belles Lettres. I am willing to ascribe to this elegant course of reading, still greater advantages than he has allowed it, and am of opinion, that the best philosophy and morality is to be found in the works of the poets; for, with regard to the philosophy, I would gladly be of opinion with the English poet, where he says,

How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull souls suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute!

I would willingly persuade myself that the best poets are capable of instructing us in every part of useful knowledge; for I find a charm in their works superior to the pleasure any other mode of writing affords me.

Whether it is the power of harmony or imagination, that thus leads me captive, I am at a loss to know; whether it is the elegance of thought, the tenderness, or the gentility peculiar to poetry, that delights me most, I am unable to determine; but all together give me the most exquisite, the most refined entertainment. I wonder not that honours next to divine have always been paid to poets; and that those heaven-favoured geniuses have ever been esteemed superior to the rest of mankind. For my own part, if I should bring an offering to the shrine of any human being, it should be to that of a poet. Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER X.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

THE approbation of Constantia is more than the reward of worlds, and her favour more valuable. The utmost of my ambition has ever been to serve and oblige her; but why will she abscuse to those services, to those poor

endeavours to please, more merit than they can possibly have a claim to? Yet it is no wonder if Constantia, who possesses every virtue in the highest degree, should carry her gratitude to excess.

I will not anticipate those evils which my fears, possibly too industrious, have so often brought before me; but, while this delightful correspondence lasts, I will sit down, with security, to enjoy the sweets of it.

Nothing could be more nobly conceived, than the sentiment of uniting the idea of a God with Truth and Simplicity. To deify and adore those amiable virtues, is certainly a very pardonable species of idolatry—if, indeed, it can be called idolatry; for we certainly worship the Supreme Perfection, while we worship his attributes, as it is only in those we can form any idea of him.

And yet it was from this source that idolatry, with all its troublesome and pernicious consequences, was derived of old. When the attributes of the universal Being were personified and exhibited by figures, the multitude, never capable of abstracted thinking, numbered so many gods.

The sentiment of your poet has, nevertheless, great metaphorical propriety; when divine honours are paid to Truth and Simplicity, much, certainly, is done for the service of virtue.

As you are professedly an admirer of simple nature, I will venture to send you a poem, which, on that account, I hope will be recommended by the subject. At least, I am sure, it has nothing else to recommend it; and let that declaration convince you, that I have not the ambition to aspire to the name and dignity of a poet, or to hope that you will bring an offering to my shrine.

WRITTEN IN A COTTAGE GARDEN,
AT A VILLAGE IN LORRAIN;
AND OCCASIONED BY A TRADITION CONCERNING A TREE OF ROSEMARY.

ARBUSTUM LOQUITUR.

I.

O Thou whom love and fancy lead
To waander near this woodland-hill,
If ever musick smooth'd thy quill,
Or pity wak'd thy gentle tend,
 Repose beneath my humble bower,
 If thou lov'st Simplicity.

D II. Stranger,

II.

Stranger, if thy lot has laid
In toilsome steenes of busy life ;
Full sorely mayst thou rue the strife
Of weary passions ill repaid.
In a garden live, like me,
If thou lov'st Simplicity.

III.

Flowers have sprung for many a year
O'er the village-maiden's grave,
That, one memorial-sprig to save,
Bore it from a sister's bier ;
And homeward-walking wept o'er me
The true tears of Simplicity.

IV.

And soon, her cottage window near,
With care my slender stem she plac'd ;
And fondly thus her grief embrac'd,
And cherish'd sad remembrance dear :
For love sincere, and friendship free,
Are children of Simplicity.

V.

When past was many a painful day,
Slow-pacing o'er the village-green,
In white were all it's maidens seen,
And bore my guardian friend away.
And wet was ev'ry eye to see
The grave of sweet Simplicity !

VI.

One generous swain her heart approv'd,
A youth whose fond and faithful breast
With many an artless sigh confess'd,
In Nature's language, that he lov'd.
But, stranger, 'tis no tale for thee,
Unless thou lov'st Simplicity.

VII.

He died—and soon her lip was cold ;
And soon her rosy cheek was pale ;
The village wept to hear the tale,
When for both the flow bell toll'd.
Beneath yon flow'ry turf they lie,
The lovers of Simplicity.

VIII.

Yet one boon have I to crave ;
Stranger, if thy pity bleed,
Wilt thou do one tender deed,
And strew my pale flowers o'er their grave ?
So lightly lie the turf on thee,
Because thou lov'st Simplicity !

There is such a pleasure in the indulgence of tender melancholy and pity, that lest I should deprive you of it, I will add no more than

THEODOSIUS.

* * * The flowery branch of Rosemary, that accompanies this, was gathered from the same tree.

LETTER XI.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

YOU must be sensible that you could not oblige me more than by favouring me with any of your poetical productions. Your village-maid is a picture of rural simplicity ; as such I shall preserve it, together with the flowery branch of rosemary that accompanied it, for the sake of the author.

Your last favour reminds me of another, which you some time ago promised, but have now, perhaps, forgot. You praised the Latin verses of the celebrated English poet we have so often admired, and called him the best writer in that language since the age of Constantine. When I complained that I was unable to read him in that language, you kindly promised me a translation of one of his finest Latin poems, which, I think, you called a Pastoral Elegy on the Death of one of his Friends, whom he expected to have embraced on his return from abroad, but found that he had taken his journey to that distant country,

—From whose bourn
No traveller returns—

Such a subject is capable of great tenderness ; and, at the hands of Milton, it could not fail of finding it. Let me have one more instance of your kindness, in the execution of your promise. Adieu !

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

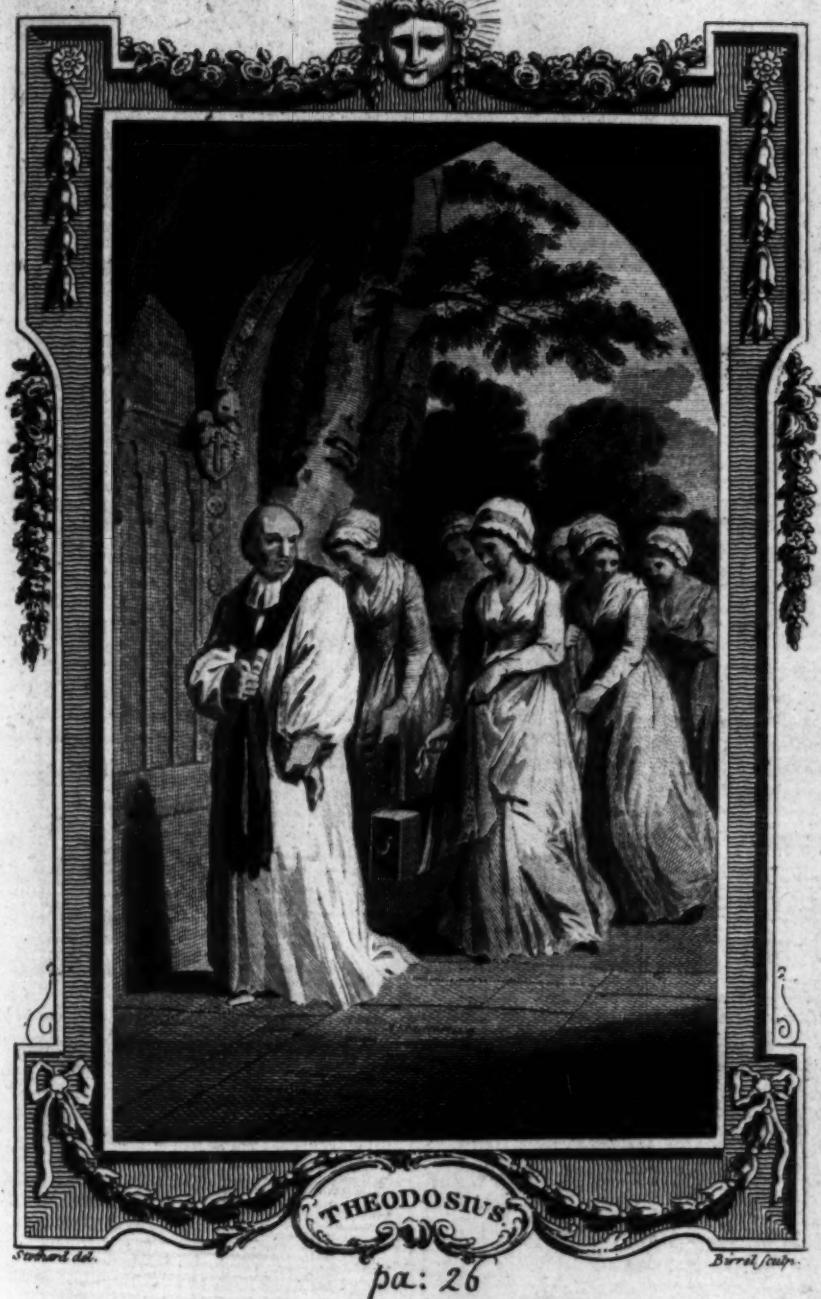
I Have made haste to oblige you ; therefore you must be as ready to excuse, as I have been to obey.

THE PASTORAL PART OF MILTON'S EPITAPHIUM DAMONIS.

O For the musick of Himeria's maids !
The strains that died in Arethusa's shades ;

Tun'd

Pla



THEODOSIUS

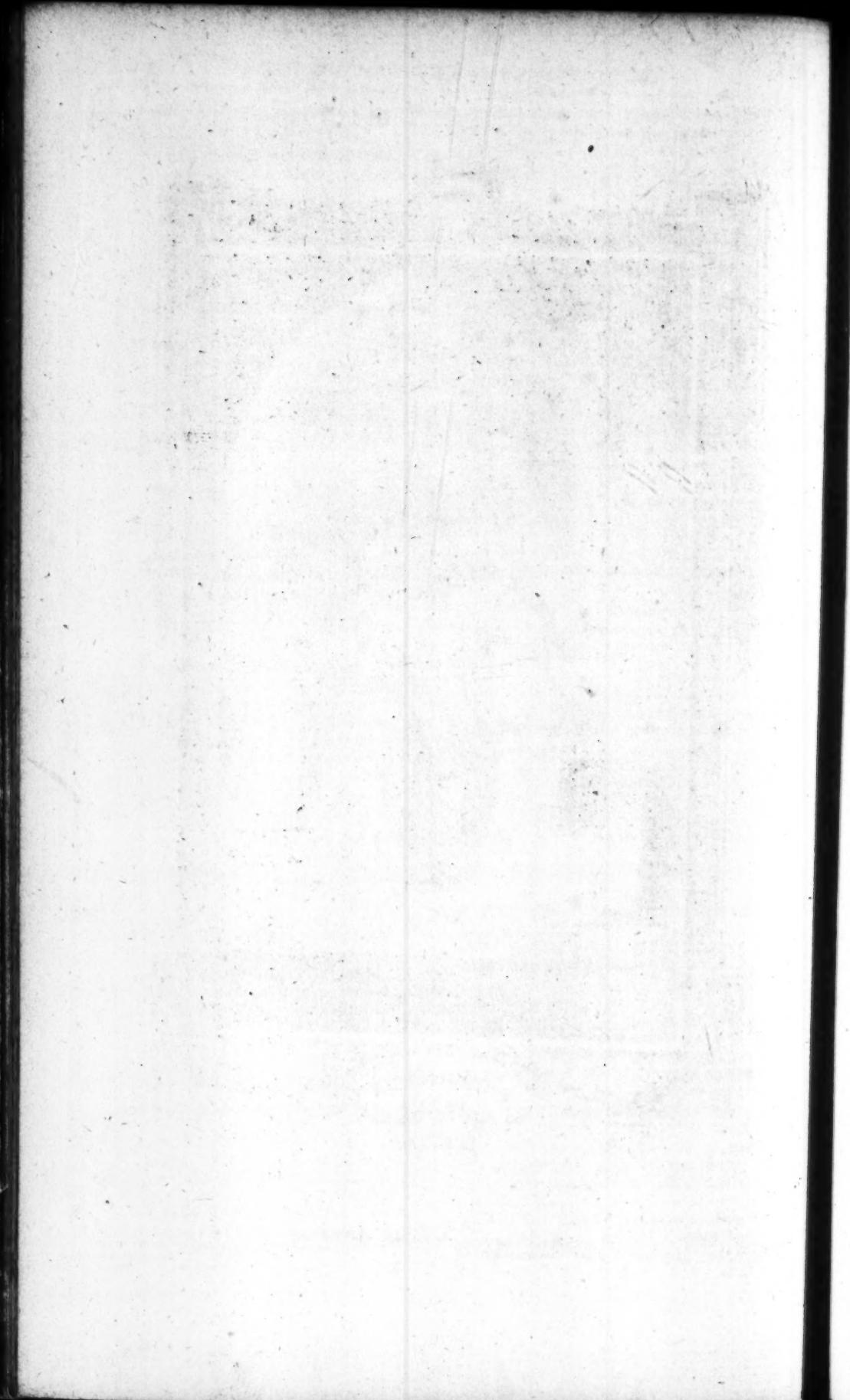
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Simoni del.

Birrell sculp.

Plate II.

Published as the Act directs, by Harrison and C^o. February 2, 1782.



Ten'd to wild sorrow on her mournful shore,
When Daphnis, Hylas, Bion, breath'd no
more;
Thames' vocal wave shall ev'ry note prolong,
And all his villas learn the Dorick song.

How Thyrifis mourn'd his long-lov'd Damon
dead;
What sighs he utter'd, and what tears he
shed—
Ye dim retreats, ye wandering fountains
know:
Ye desart-wilds bore witness to his woe;
Where oft in grief he pass'd the tedious day,
Or lonely languish'd the long night away.

Twice did the fields their blooming honours
bear,
And Autumn twice resign the golden ear,
Unconscious of his loss while Thyrifis staid.
To woo sweet Fancy in the Fusan shade.
Crown'd with her favour, when he sought
again
His flock forsaken, and his native plain;
When to his old elm's wonted shade return'd,
Then—then he miss'd his parted friend—
and mourn'd.
And go, (he cry'd) my tender lambs adieu!
Your wretched master has no time for you.

Yet are there powers divine in earth or sky?
Gods can they be, who destin'd thee to die?
And shalt thou mix with shades of vulgar
name;
Lost thy fair honours, and forgot thy fame?
Not he, the god whose golden wand restrains
The pale-ey'd people of the gloomy plains,
Of Damon's fate shall thus regardless be,
Or suffer vulgar shades to herd with thee.

Then go, &c.

Yet while one strain my trembling tongue
may try,
Not unlameted, shepherd, shalt thou die.
Long in these fields thy fame shall flourish
fair,
And Daphnis only greater honours share;
To Daphnis only purer vows be paid,
While Pan, or Pales, loves the village-shade.
If Truth or Science may survive the grave,
Or, what is more, a poet's friendship save,

Then go, &c.

These, these are thine: for me what hopes
remain!
Save of long sorrow, and of anguish vain.
For who, still faithful to my side shall go,
Like thee, thro' regions clad with chilling
snow?
Like thee, the rage of fiery summers bear,
When nature shrinks beneath the burning air?

The lurking dangers of the chace essay,
Or soothe with song and various tale the day?

Then go, &c.

To whom shall I my hopes and fears impart?
Or trust the cares and follies of my heart?
Whose gentle counsels put those cares to
flight?
Whose cheerful converse cheat the tedious
night?
The social hearth when Autumn's treasures
store,
Chill blow the winds without, and thro' the
bleak elm roar.

Then go, &c.

When the fierce suns of summer noons in-
vade,
And Pan reposes in the green-wood shade,
The shepherds hide, the nymphs plunge
down the deep,
And waves the hedge-row o'er the plow-
man's sleep:
Ah! who shall charm with such address
refin'd;
Such Attick wit, and elegance of mind?

Then go, &c.

Alas! now lonely round my fields I stray;
And lonely seek the pasture's wonted way:
Or in some dim vale's mournful shade re-
pose—
There penive wait the weary day's slow close;
While showers descend, the gloomy tempest
raves,
And o'er my head the straggling twilight
waves.

Then go, &c.

Where once fair harvest cloath'd my cultur'd
plain,
Now weeds obscene and vexing brambles
reign;
The groves of myrtle, and the clustering vine,
Delight no more; for joy no more is mine.
My flocks no longer find a master's care;
E'en piteous as they gaze with looks of
dumb despair.

Then go, &c.

Thy hazel, Tyt'us, has no charms for me;
Nor yet thy wild ash, lov'd Alphefibiae.
No more shall Fancy weave her rural dream,
By Ægon's willow, or Amynta's stream,
The trembling leaves, the fountain's cool
serene,
The murmuring zephyr, and the mossy green;
These smile unseen, and those unheeded say,
I cut my shrubs, and heedless walk'd away.

Then go, &c.

Mopius, who knows what fates the stars dispense,
And solves the grove's wild warblings into sense:
This Mopius mark'd—what thus thy spleen
Can move?
Some baleful planet, or some hopeless love?
The star of Saturn oft annoys the swain,
And in the dull, cold breast, long holds his leaden reign.

Then go, &c.

The nymphs, too, piteous of their shepherd's woe,
Came, the sad cause solicitous to know:
Is this the port of jocund youth, (they cry;) That look disgusted, and that down-cast eye?
Gay smiles and love on that soft season wait;
*He's twice a wretch, whom beauty wounds too late.

Then go, &c.

One gentle tear the British Chloris gave;
Chloris, the grace of Maldon's purple waves
In vain—my grief no soothing words disarm,
Nor future hopes, nor present good can charm.

Then go, &c.

The happier flock one social spirit moves,
The same their sport, their pastures, and their loves:
Their hearts to no peculiar object tend,
None knows a favourite, or selects a friend.
So herd the various natives of the main,
And Proteus drives in crowds his scaly train.
The feather'd tribes, too, find an easier fate;
The mestest sparrow still enjoys his mate;
And when by chance or weating age shiedies,
The transient loss a second choice supplies.

Man, hapless man! for ever doom'd to know
The dire vexations that from discord flow,
In all the countless numbers of his kind,
Can scarcely meet with one congenial mind!
If happily found, Death wings the fatal dart,
The tender union breaks, and breaks his heart.

Then go, &c.

* Milton seems to have borrowed this sentiment from Gaurini;

*Che se t'affale a la canuta estate
Amorofo talento,
Havrai doppio tormento,
E di quel, che potendo non volesti,
E di quel, che volendo non potrai.*

The Tuscans were a branch of the Pelasgi that migrated into Europe not many years after the dispersion. Some of them marched by land as far as Lydia, and from thence detached a colony under the conduct of Tyrsenus to Italy.

When Milton was in Italy, Carlo Dati was professor of philosophy at Florence. A liberal friend to men of genius and learning, as well foreigners as his own countrymen. He wrote a panegyric and some poems on Lewis XIV, besides other tracts.

Ah! me! what error tempted me to go
O'er foreign mountains and thro' Alpine snow?

Too great a price to mark in Tiber's gloom
The mournful image of departed Rome!
Nay, yet immortal, could the boast again
The glories of her universal reign,
And all that Maro left his fields to see,
Too great the purchase to abandon thee!
To leave thee in a land no longer seen!—
Bid mountains rise, and oceans roll between!

Ah! not embrace thee!—not to see thee die!
Meet thy last looks, or close thy languid eye!
Not one fond farewell with thy shade to send,
Nor bid thee think of thy surviving friend!

Then go, &c.

Ye Tuscan shepherds, pardon me this tear!
Dear to the muse, to me for ever dear!
The youth I mourn a Tuscan title bore:
See †Lydian Lucca for her son deplore!

O days of ecstasy! when rapt I lay
Where Arno wanders down his flowery way,
Pluck'd the pale violet, press'd the velvet mead,

Or bade the myrtle's balmy fragrance bleed!
Delighted heard, amidst the rural throng,
Menalcas strive with Lycidas in song.

Oft would my voice the mimick strain essay,
Nor haply all unheeded was my lay:
For, shepherds, yet I boast your gen'rous meed,
The osier basket, and compacted reed,
Francino crown'd me with a poet's fame,
And Dati † taught his beechen groves my name,

Milton, when he was in Italy, had the peculiar good fortune to find an age of geniuses, and to be distinguished by their favour in a very extraordinary manner. That polish which the young mind receives from the elegant simplicity of the classics, he enjoyed in the greatest

perfection. The considerable fund of that knowledge which he took with him into Italy, he had the happiest means of improving and perfecting, in those inspiring scenes where the finest writers of Latin first drew their breath. Those scenes afforded the best comment on the works of the Roman classics; and Milton shewed in all his Latin poems, that he tasted their beauties in the most refined degree.

The friend he bewails in the charming poem, of which I made these humble efforts to shew you the beauties, was the companion of his early years; and it is no wonder that he laments him with such pathetick tenderness: for friendships of that kind, which are nurtured under the sunshine of young enthusiasm, are always the most vigorous.—Are they not, my Constantia?—I feel they are; for I am, &c.

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XIII.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

I flew with your letter to our favorite alcove; and there with what pleasure, with what avidity I perused it, Theodosius need not be told.

I verily believe, that I am better pleased to be entertained than to be instructed; for I scarce ever received so much pleasure from a letter of yours, as your last afforded me; yet what can be the reason? It is not, certainly, that I am jealous of your instructive letters, as giving you a superiority; I cannot charge myself with so much pride. Nay, were I not sensible of that superiority, I must be stupid indeed: thus, however, I flatter myself on my penetration in being able to distinguish it, and on my modesty in being satisfied with it; and thus, like many other good people, I am vain of being free from vanity.

But all the instructions of my amiable philosopher have been seasoned with so much politeness, or conveyed in such an indirect manner, that while I had all the opportunity of profiting by them, I could hardly ever discern that they were intended for my use. If, then, your last letter pleased me more than any other, it is because I am idle and voluptuous,

and take more pleasure in poetry than in philosophy.

Yet the genius of Milton had such a moral turn, that he seldom wrote poetry without writing philosophy; and even the pastoral you have so obligingly translated, is not, I find, without something of it. How beautifully does he bewail the lost advantages of friendship!

To whom shall I my hopes and fears impart,
Or trust the cares and follies of my heart?

And how truly does he lament, that man,

In all the countless numbers of his kind,
Can rarely meet with one congenial mind!

Young as I am, I have felt the force of this truth, and have made many melancholy reflections upon it, after the painful, ridiculous, trifling, and impertinent visits, I have been obliged to pay and receive, from the sillier part of my sex. Horrid tyranny of fashion, that imposes this upon us! What right can an equality, or a superiority of fortune, give one woman to rob another of her time, sense, and patience? I say, her sense; for the conversation of fools leaves a tincture of folly upon us. What title has dress or figure to lay a tax upon us for admiration? Do not they who expect this, insult our understanding? And are not those who pay it, the slaves of folly? O that the shackles of custom were once broken, and that we might chuse our society out of either sex, without censure or inconvenience!

Just before I received your letter, I was delivered from the most despicable and impertinent set of visitors that ever disgraced the name of good company. To the such visits are always visitations. To the abovementioned deliverance, you may, if you please, impute some degree of that extraordinary pleasure I ascribed to the perusal of your letter. This I say, lest I should contribute to make you, what you have so often made me, vain; and thus, at least, you must acknowledge, that I outdo you in generosity.

I am not displeased with your observation, that young friendships are the most tender: no doubt they are; for the friendships, like all other pursuits and attachments of youth, have novelty to recommend them, passions to unloven, and enthusiasm

enthusiasm to cherish them. But, ah! my friend! (for once I will say, my Theodosius!) when novelty is no more; when the passions subside, and enthusiasm vanishes like a dream; will not the friendships, will not the attachments, that these principles produced, vanish with them? I will not fear it, though it should be true:

*non è prudenza
Ma follia de mortali;
L'arte crudel di presagirsi i mali.*

One thing, however, I will freely acknowledge, or rather boast of, that my friendship for Theodosius is, exclusively, founded on esteem. For this reason, I flatter myself, that it will last in all its present cordiality—why should it not? It has nothing to lose, when the charm of novelty is lost. Its existence by no means depends upon the passions; it has, therefore, nothing to apprehend when they languish or decline. It derives not its support from enthusiasm, and, consequently, cannot suffer when enthusiasm dies away.

While thus I comfort, I hope I do not deceive myself. But, should even that be the case, let your sagacity for once give way to your compassion, and do not undeceive me. This is, perhaps, the only instance in which I could be satisfied with myself, for declining the report of truth.

Observe, however, that I expect you will, with the utmost candour and ingenuity, resolve some parts of my doubts, and tell me freely, whether those young friendships which are heightened by novelty, by the passions, and enthusiasm, will not inevitably perish with those sources that support them.

You see I have been at pains to induce you to declare your sentiments on this subject; since I have removed the principal objection that might have occurred to you, by declaring, that my friendship for you cannot be affected by the argument. Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XIV.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

THOUGH there is nothing in which Constantia has not a right to command her friend, and though, in

every thing, it is his pride and pleasure to obey her; yet he will own, that he goes unwillingly about the task she has appointed him.

Ah! my dear, my amiable moralist! It is frequently the happiness of man to shut his eyes against the infirmities of his nature! In those circumstances, where the knowledge of his weakness cannot save him from some real evil, that knowledge is of less value than ignorance.

The benevolent purposes of Providence have concealed the future from us, that we may not be interrupted in the enjoyment of the present; and it is, in many cases, necessary to our happiness, that we should imitate this economy of the Supreme Wisdom, and embrace those innocent pleasures which the several periods of life may afford us, without enquiring too officiously into their causes or events, and without being too solicitous about their duration.

Many, possibly, of our pleasures, many, I am sure, of our amusements, spring from such sources, as, upon enquiry, would be found to do little honour to a creature distinguished by reason. Their tendency, at the same time, is frequently as insignificant as their cause, and both are unworthy of a serious enquiry.

There are, indeed, enjoyments of a higher nature that may better deserve our attention; and yet, to enquire into the probability of their duration, might contribute very little to our happiness.

Such, in particular, are the connections of friendship. These are the property of man, and must, therefore, be frail, changeable, and uncertain, like himself. It must, consequently, be for his ease, to sit down unapprehensive to enjoy them, without meditating on all the possible variety of evils to which they must be exposed from a change of sentiments and inclinations, and from the several contingencies of chance and time.

It is into the fate of young friendships, my Constantia, that you would lead my enquiries. These, indeed, are not the least unworthy of our attention; for youth is the season both of friendship and of virtue. If to a disposition naturally not unsociable, we have added the advantages of a liberal education, we come into the business and society of life, in general, better and

and happier creatures than we are when we leave it.

We step into the world with liberal sentiments, and benevolent affections; but the experimental knowledge of men contracts the former, and starves the latter: insomuch, that he must be possessed of a disposition more than ordinarily humane, who does not in some degree become a misanthropist before he dies. I may go farther, and add, that he must have uncommon virtue and greatness of mind, who, with unblemished manners, and uncontracted sentiments, can sail with such a corrupted crew down the current of life.

Man is, in spite of all his reason, an imitative creature; and what he has been long accustomed to observe in others, he will, with difficulty, forbear to admit in himself. By habit we may bring ourselves to behold deformity without disgust; and by being long conversant in scenes of enmity and insincerity, the love of truth and humankind will insensibly decay.

As youth, therefore, is the season of sincerity and benevolence, it must, of consequence, be the most promising season of friendship; for those virtues are its best and surest foundation.

We love a benevolent man for our own sakes, and a sincere man for the sake of his sincerity. Esteem for ever attends the union of these; that esteem which my Constantia has done me the honour to acknowledge as the source of her friendship!

Thus, my fair casuist, you see we have a sufficient foundation whereon to erect an early friendship, exclusive of novelty, the passions, and enthusiasm; and we may justly conclude, therefore, that such a friendship may exist, though all such auxiliaries should vanish or decay.

Yet while these last, they undoubtedly yield us a more high-set pleasure, as well in friendship, as in every other enjoyment.

Nevertheless, I know not whether much ought to be ascribed to novelty; which, in the cup of friendship, is certainly the very worst ingredient. Possibly it may, for a while, give a poignancy to the taste, but the mellowing power of time, produces a much better and more agreeable flavour.

The prevalence and activity of the passions, keep up that lively zest and

ardour of affection, which add to the readiness of confidence, and are productive of a thousand agreeable sensations.

Enthusiasm has an effect on friendship proportionable to its influence on love. It heightens it with the glowing sentiments of imagination, and embellishes its real advantages with the visionary charms of fancy and intellectual refinement!

Yet when these shall depart with departing youth; while sincerity and benevolence remain, friendship shall remain with them. A reflection, which affords me the highest consolation! as I am convinced that, in consequence of those principles, Constantia cannot cease to be the friend of

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XV.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

WHAT a letter! my friend. If you have drawn a true picture of human nature, and if the knowledge of the world be really attended with the consequences you mention, who would not live in ignorance? Ah, Theodosius! what fears, what uneasiness, has your letter awakened! Better, indeed, my philosopher, had you suffered me to continue in ignorance! Better, and kinder, had you permitted me to enjoy my visionary dream of the duration and improvement of human virtue! Ah! too penetrating friend! Too ingenious in the discovery of that weakness it would have been happier to hide! You were sensible of this truth; and why would you gratify my impertinent curiosity, only to make me miserable? To give melancholy and mortifying ideas of that life in which my lot has fallen!

Yet surely, Theodosius, the sweet affections of benevolence will not wear away with youth. If the commerce of the world doth not corrupt the heart, surely, it will still have room for so delightful a guest. I declare, that without one womanish fear, I would part with my being, rather than hold it on any other terms.

But what superfluous apprehensions do I entertain? This dreadful shipwreck can

can only happen on the tempestuous ocean of the world; my bark, I am determined, shall not be exposed to such ruin. Safely shall it steer into some quiet harbour, and rest secure from storms and tempests.

Seriously and plainly, my friend, you have given me such ideas of mixing with the world, and of the inconveniences which attend it, that I, who can boast no superior fortitude, conclude it must be my happiness to live in solitary obscurity. There I can embrace your good prelate's precept, and live agreeably to nature. There I shall be free from the impertinence of folly, and the censoriousness of envy. My precious hours will not be sacrificed to triflers; I shall employ them in studies worthy of a rational creature.

O Theodosius! for those delightful moments that shall glide away on the halcyon wings of peace and tranquillity: for those dear uninterrupted days of letters and leisure, when the mind may riot in intellectual festivity; and, free from every low, every vulgar and debasing care, may acquire that dignity and knowledge which shall properly recommend it to some higher state of existence!

What luxury is in the thought! even now I anticipate the happiness I describe. Even now, in imagination, I enjoy those easy pleasures, that independence of mind and body, which solitude and liberty must afford. I look back on Theodosius bustling in the world, pity him, pray for him, and tremble for his virtue. Adieu! Adieu!

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XVI.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

'ENJOY thy dream, dear and amiable enthusiast! Enjoy thy visionary scene! To rouse thee from those delightful reveries, to break those fancy-favoured slumbers, would be cruel, if not impious.' Such, and so expressed, were my sentiments, on perusing your last dear letter. But tenderness must give place to truth; at least, in a circumstance so important, as that of laying down a plan of life.

There is scarce any thing in which the mind is so apt to mistake its true interest, as in projects of future happiness. It is impossible to know how we shall bear those stations or circumstances, which we have only contemplated at an unaffectionate distance; and yet, with an assurance that does more honour to our courage than our discretion, we venture to conclude, that those appointments or schemes of life to which we are perfectly strangers, would infallibly compleat our felicity.

In the mean time, we never consider, that new stations, and appointments to which we have not been accustomed, must necessarily take us out of our usual train of sentiments, actions, and attentions. This, however, will make us uneasy; for change, as Numa observed, when he was invited to the kingdom of Rome, is always an evil, and we never feel it more sensibly than in the manner and economy of life.

With respect to your scheme of living secluded from the world, I should have condemned it with the short censure of a smile, had I not paid so much deference to your reason and judgment, as to conclude, that those ought to be appealed to on every argument that might relate to your sentiments and resolutions,

Will my beautiful friend forgive me, then, if I suppose that judgment to have been bribed by enthusiasm, when she concluded that, by living alone, she should live agreeably to nature?

I am sensible, Madam, that by this you meant no more than, that such a mode of life would exempt you from those external temptations, those idle luxuries and follies, which are apt to make us deviate from the paths of truth and simplicity. But did you consider, that to live alone, is to live contrary to nature? A state of solitude, is not the natural state of man. The arguments I should make use of to prove this are old and obvious. That I may be less unentertaining, therefore, while I mean to set before you the inconveniences attending your scheme of life, I will give you a short account of a lady of my own family, who formed the same resolutions, and put them in practice.

Thus her story is related, in a manuscript still preserved among the family papers.

Eudocia,

* Eudocia, an only daughter, was bred up under the auspices of Altheira, a lady equally distinguished by her piety as a christian, and her affection as a parent. The temper and genius of the daughter were naturally warm and susceptible: the offices and duties of religion had habitually inspired her with such a zealous and fervent devotion, that she seemed to have no happiness that did not flow from those exercises and attentions which religion required.

* Her knowledge of books was little, of human nature less. She had, notwithstanding, conceived an infinite contempt for that world to which she was utterly a stranger, and concluded, that to enter into the interests and engagements of society, would be a voluntary sacrifice to vice and folly.

* Eudocia was, in natural good sense, beauty, and a sweetnes of disposition, equalled by few women of her time. These qualities engaged the affections of Alphenor, a gentleman whose genius and penetration gave him a kind of intuitive knowledge of the human heart.

* He concluded, that every attempt to introduce Eudocia to the world, or to establish the social life in her good opinion, would be vain. He knew that it would be fruitless to argue with her on the pleasures she had never known, and the miseries she had never experienced. He therefore did not expatriate either on the advantages of society, or the inconveniences of solitude; for such had been the condition of Eudocia's life, that as yet she was in a great measure a stranger to both.

* Upon the death of her parents, which happened before she had attained her twenty-fifth year, her fortune and manner of life were at her own disposal. She now determined to put in execution a scheme which she had long meditated. It was to retire, but not into a convent. A spirit of liberty had always saved her from that sacrifice, however industriously solicited by the emissaries of the church, or encouraged by selfish relations.

* She was possessed of an estate, situated in a very retired part of the province of Compeigne; and there it

* was that she had determined to live sequestered from the world, with no other society than an aged confessor and necessary domesticks. Of the last she made a very few, and those females, sufficient.

* At this crisis it might have been expected, that Alphenor would have used his utmost address to dissuade her from her purpose. By no means. On the contrary, he encouraged her in her resolution, applauded the piety of her purpose, and expatiated on the happiness of solitary sanctity. He assumed not the least of the lover's character, but that of the religious friend.

* By this means he gained one point, which he had used all his industry, all his art to obtain. He had Eudocia's permission to pay her one visit at the end of three months after her retirement; a favour which was allowed to none beside, either of her friends or acquaintance, and which Alphenor himself, though through the mediation of religion, had scarce address sufficient to obtain.

* Eudocia retired. She approached the confines of her estate with raptures, and paid a kind of idolatrous worship to the venerable groves that surrounded her habitation.

* "Hail," she cried, "ye innocent and happy foresters! ye shall at once be the witnesses and the guardians of my repose. Enjoy your vegetable existence, secure from the cruelties and the ravages of man! I have fled from the evils of society, to enjoy peace and innocence with you; my undesigning friends! my blameless companions! often shall I associate with you, and repose under the kind protection of your shade."

* With the same kind of enthusiastic pleasure she walked through the several apartments of her house, consecrating each with a kind of petitionary ejaculation,

* For the first week of her retirement, she found sufficient employment in the economy of her family, and the distribution of their several offices to her domesticks. The second she devoted wholly to religious exercises and the raptures of devotion.

I have been interrupted, and you will not at present be troubled with any farther account of my pious ancestor. Adieu!

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XVII.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

BUT whatever is rapturous cannot last long: those exercises that lift the mind above its usual pitch, if too frequently or too long indulged, will at length either totally destroy it, or deprive it of that sobriety, which is necessary for the preservation of its due poise.

Nature seems, in kindness, to have guarded us against the inconveniences that might arise from hence, by shortening the influence of joy, by inclining us to variety, and by giving the property, either of indifference or disgust, to every object that has been too long or too assiduously pursued; with whatever avidity it might have been embraced at first.

That little society to which Eudocia had hitherto been accustomed, was a necessary relief from the affiduities of religious studies and exercises; and, far from being any prejudice, was in reality favourable to the interests of religion. It is certain, however, that she was of a different opinion, upon her first seclusion from the world; but many weeks had not passed before she felt the inconveniences of her mistake, if she was unwilling to perceive the mistake itself.

The exercises of devotion, by being too frequently repeated, became languid and unaffected: her mind, having been accustomed to communication, shrunk under the weight of its own sentiments; and every succeeding day approached less welcome, and more feared than the former.

What should she do? Should she return to that world she had forsaken and despised? But a sense of shame and pride rose in opposition to that thought, and strangled it in its birth.

In this dissatisfied and dejected state, she recollects the appointment of Al-

phenor's visit—with joy she recollects it, and remembered, with a blush, the difficulties she had started against it.

"How," said she, "shall I conceal that pleasure which I cannot but feel at the sight of Alphenor? If I express my real sentiments he will have reason to think his presence of some consequence to my happiness; and if I receive his visit with an indifference, equal to that with which I received the proposal of it, I shall do violence to that candour and sincerity of heart which cannot bear even the shadow of dissimulation. In the former case, I should appear a weak and unsteady creature to Alphenor; in the latter, I should become insupportable to myself."

While she was thus meditating in what manner she should receive her friend, the time appointed for his visit was at hand. But Alphenor did not appear: master of every key to the human heart, he knew that if, by delaying his visit to Eudocia, he gave it the appearance of uncertainty, that uncertainty would probably create an anxiety on her part, which might not be unfavourable to his design.

This had the desired effect: day after day passed away in the same solitary languor, and Eudocia concluded, that the many objections she had made to Alphenor's visit had determined him at last to think of it no more. This reflection made her miserable, and she now wished for nothing so ardently, as that the presence of her friend would prove those apprehensions vain.

At length he came. A tear fell from the eye of Eudocia when she received him; he observed it, and knew that he had now nothing more to do, than to reconcile her to herself, and to enable her to acknowledge her mistake without shame or confusion.

Those wants that invention or eloquence could supply never distressed him long.

"I hope, Madam," said he, "that a life of solitude has been more comfortable to you than it has been to me."—"How!" cried Eudocia, "has Alphenor been a *solitaire*?"

"Such, Madam, I have been ever since I lost the happiness of Eudocia's

nia's

"cia's conversation. It was always my ambition to imitate her. "Shall she," said I, "shall a woman have fortitude to forsake the world, and retire to solitude, to practise the sublime duties of religion; and shall I not profit by the example of that virtue I cannot but praise?"—But, alas, Madam! alas, Eudocia! shall I confess to you——"

"What would Alphenor confess?"—"That either the miseries and the inconveniences of absolute solitude must be very great, or that I must have an uncommon and disgraceful weakness of mind; for the time I have thus devoted, I have not spent in happiness, but in languor and discontent."

Eudocia shed another tear.

"How kind," said Alphenor, "thus to pity the unhappiness of your friend!"

"I cannot," replied Eudocia, "accept of a compliment I do not deserve. The tear you observed had something selfish in it. Alphenor can have no weakness that is not the weakness of human nature; and, could it be any satisfaction to him to know that his friend has been as miserable in a state of solitude as himself, his own ingenuous confession might countenance her in acknowledging it."

* * * * *

For a woman of my Constantia's penetration, it would be needless to transcribe any more of the above narrative; and it will be sufficient to inform her, that from the union of Alphenor and Eudocia, in a distant descent, came

THEODOSIUS.

LETTER XVIII.

CONSTANTIA TO THEODOSIUS.

O H, Theodosius!—my guide!—my friend!—my instructor! alas!—no more!

The tear swims in my eye—my heart swells; and my hand trembles while I tell you that you are—banished

for ever from this place and that I am forbidden to see you, or hear from you more.

What, what shall I do! nothing ever can repair this cruel loss—the loss of a wife, a learned, and a virtuous friend! What has the world of equal worth!—Deprived, for ever deprived of that presence which enlivened with invariable cheerfulness and sensibility!—of that conversation which never failed to make the mind richer, the heart happier—and (O cruel extension of resentment!) of that precious, that instructive correspondence, which, as it afforded me the best means of cultivating and improving my mind, ought to have been considered with gratitude by the very person who has forbidden it

But of whom, or of what do I presume to complain? Duty restrains the remonstrances of grief, and the expostulations of sorrow. You are not now ignorant that the quarrel you dreaded has actually happened, with the bitterest recriminations.

Then, farewell, my best and most valuable friend!—for ever to be remembered!—for ever to be regretted! Accept of all I can return for your invariable, your industrious kindness! Most respected of men!—most esteemed of friends! Accept the gratitude of a tear, and think of

CONSTANTIA.

LETTER XIX.

TO THEODOSIUS.

FROM AN UNKNOWN HAND.

THE writer of this letter is not a stranger to the mutual regard of Theodosius and Constantia. From sure authority he knows, that the hand of that lady is, by the appointment of her father, in which, it seems, she has acquiesced, within two days to be given to another. Theodosius will make what use he thinks proper of this information, and conclude, that he receives it from

A FRIEND.

LETTER XX*.

THEODOSIUS TO CONSTANTIA.

THE thought of my Constantia, which has for some time been my only happiness, is now become a great-

er torment to me than I am able to bear. Must I then live to see you another's?—Death is in the thought; and, indeed, life itself is now become a burden to me. May you long be happy in the world! but forget that there was ever such a man in it as

THEODOSIUS.

* This letter, which, with some little variations, is recorded by the Spectator, No. 164, concludes the Correspondence of Theodosius and Constantia, from their first acquaintance to the departure of Theodosius.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.